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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA NOTES (July 15-28, 2007)

¶1. (U) Summary: The following Northern Uganda Notes provides information on the situation on the ground and USG activities aimed at meeting Mission's objectives in northern Uganda. These objectives include promoting regional stability through peace and security, good governance, access to social services, economic growth, and humanitarian assistance. Post appreciates feedback from consumers on the utility of this product and any gaps in information that need to be filled. End Summary.

PEACE AND RECONCILIATION PROCESSES

¶2. (SBU) The Government of Uganda and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) want to extend the one month recess to provide more time for consultations with stakeholders. The LRA may request an additional month to undertake consultations. It has been waiting for Riek Machar, the southern Sudanese mediator, to approve its budget for consultations. The GOU also would like additional time, but is wary of too long of a delay.

¶3. (SBU) The Uganda Human Rights Commission Commissioner Veronica Bichertero met with Vincent Otti on June 22 at Rikwangba to discuss the issue of women and children. For the first time, Otti appeared to accept that there were civilian women and children with the LRA. He agreed to allow women and children to attend a UNICEF site by day to receive medical, psycho-social, and recreational services, but not schooling. The written agreement would go into effect with the signing of a peace deal. Otti had previously stated that the women and children with the LRA were "their people."

¶4. (SBU) The Government of Norway is establishing a video teleconferencing link for the LRA between Juba and Garamba National Park. This will facilitate more direct involvement of the LRA leadership in the talks.

¶5. (SBU) USG Activities: The agreement between the Government and the LRA sets out the principles for holding accountable those responsible for committing war crimes, and for achieving reconciliation. The GOU and the LRA plan to undertake consultations with stakeholders and legal experts on how to implement the agreement. The GOU has asked development partners to assist with this process while the LRA has submitted a proposal to the Riek Machar. USAID, in partnership with the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, has offered to provide support to the GOU to undertake its part of the accountability and reconciliation consultations.

¶6. (SBU) The GOU's Ministry of Internal Affairs and Amnesty Commission are planning four consultation conferences in Northern Uganda in Gulu, Adjumani, Lira, and Soroti. Consultations in the

region are meant for hearing the "voices of the people" - these include district and local leaders, women, youth, children and other victims in the LRA affected districts. There will be a meeting in Kampala for consulting the formal justice system. The consultations are planned for early to mid-August and will also involve civil society organizations that have researched transitional justice concepts in the context of northern Uganda.

¶17. (SBU) P/E Chief met with Matthew Brubacher, Associate Situation Analyst with the International Criminal Court on July 19. Over the past two years, Brubacher traveled frequently to northern Uganda, Sudan, and Congo to assess the ground situation. He is in Uganda to participate in sensitization meetings with the public on ICC processes, the warrants for the LRA leadership, and international standards of justice. The ICC office in Kampala has 15 full-time staff. Brubacher said that the available evidence to the ICC indicates that the LRA leadership is using the peace process to regroup, rearm, resupply, and rebrand its image. Nonetheless, the ICC would continue to urge the Government and local leaders to ensure that the accountability and reconciliation mechanism contain adequate justice for the victims of the conflict.

¶18. (SBU) P/E Chief and Economic/Commercial Officer met with Uganda's High Commissioner to The Hague, Miriam Blaack on July 24. She is participating in discussions among Government officials on the potential outcomes of the peace talks. The Government is concerned that the LRA may sign a peace deal it never intends to honor. Nonetheless, the GOU is committed to the peace process and is exploring ways in which to encourage the LRA to negotiate seriously on the accountability and reconciliation mechanisms.

¶19. (SBU) P/E Chief and USAID Peace Support Advisor met with Adam O'Brien from the International Crisis Group on July 25. O'Brien is

KAMPALA 00001224 002 OF 003

preparing the ICG's next update on northern Uganda, which will be published in late August. O'Brien said that from ICG's perspective, the LRA delegation's demands at the peace negotiations do not match the security interests of LRA leaders Joseph Kony, Vincent Otti, and the other two ICC indictees. In his view, the regional dimensions of the LRA issue need to be addressed, i.e. Khartoum's alleged support for the LRA and Congo's inaction against the LRA. He concluded that the LRA is using the talks to re-invent itself and to be available to destabilize southern Sudan, which has upcoming elections in 2009 and the referendum in 2011.

¶110. (SBU) P/E Chief and USAID Peace Support Advisor met with Santa Okot, a former Member of Parliament from Lango, who is now a member of the LRA negotiating team on July 25. Okot confirmed that Otti was allowing women and children to receive medical attention. She received permission from Otti to organize the women and children in the camp into groups with designated group leaders. Okot said that some of these women leaders will attend the consultations at Rikwangba. There, other Ugandan women and local government leaders could have access to them. Okot provided a copy of the LRA consultation proposal, which calls for 500 delegates to go to Rikwangba for USD 2.1 million, subsequently revised to USD 1.8 million. The LRA request is based on the need for facilities to be built to host large numbers of people. The first stage of the LRA consultations is direct discussions between Kony and the northern Ugandans assembled. The second part will be for experts to assist the LRA in writing the implementing protocol for Agenda Item 2: Comprehensive Solutions and for Agenda Item 3: Accountability and Reconciliation Mechanisms.

¶111. (SBU) According to Okot, LRA leaders Kony and Otti took the U.S. press statement in February as a sign of U.S. interest in the talks. Kony and Otti thought that the U.S. was silent on the peace process because they had heard that President Bush was told by President Museveni that the "LRA was not serious." Okot said that the LRA leadership is listening to what the U.S. says. Silence is easily manipulated by others, according to Okot. She also said that Kony would want to sign the final peace deal in Gulu, northern Uganda, but will need security guarantees if he comes to Uganda. He fears that the GOU will hand him over to the ICC like Nigeria handed over Charles Taylor to the Special Court for Sierra Leone. P/E

Chief clarified the circumstances of Taylor's hand-over. Okot said that the LRA believes a final agreement would not be ready before July 2008.

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY
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¶12. (SBU) Efforts to improve the coordination of humanitarian assistance within Uganda are moving forward. Theophane Nikyema, United Nations Development Program Resident Representative, has been named the U.N. Humanitarian Coordinator. To further strengthen the coordination, U.N. Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, John Holmes, created a new Senior Adviser position to help support, prioritize humanitarian aid, enhance system-wide coherence, and aid effectiveness through strategic and operational guidance of humanitarian and early recovery programming. The Senior Adviser will work closely with the head of OCHA, and receive support from the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Activities (UNOCHA) to carry out these responsibilities.

¶13. (SBU) UNDP appointed a new Early Recovery Officer in response to heavy criticism over lack of leadership and response in the sector. In an interesting first move, UNDP offered to fill the gap in Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Currently, UNICEF is the lead for GBV, but would like to scale back its sector and coordination responsibilities to a few core areas. The change will require agreement by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and UN Country Team; it is not imminent.

¶14. (SBU) Recruitment and retention of teachers and health workers in return areas continues to be a challenge for early recovery. Absenteeism at schools and functioning health posts in return areas is high. Increased supervision and mentoring support of staff is needed, and performance or hardship incentives could also be considered to help meet this growing gap.

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IN THE MEDIA AND THE WEB
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¶15. (U) Michael Gerson's opinion piece in the Washington Post

KAMPALA 00001224 003 OF 003

entitled "The Price of Peace in Uganda" appeared on July 25. Gerson stated that "some in Congress are calling for the appointment of an American Special Envoy to push for a final agreement. Such appointments have been useful in other cases. Here, African mediators from Mozambique, southern Sudan, and the African Union want to take the lead - and they have more urgent needs than getting an envoy." Gerson argues that a peace settlement requires resources to assist demobilized ex-combatants and abductees. He also stated that military pressure must continue because "the more secure and confident the LRA becomes, the less likely it is to disband." Gerson advocates for more action by MONUC against the LRA and the sharing of intelligence between the U.S. and MONUC. He also states that the treatment for Kony might become an obstacle to a peace agreement. Gerson states that many of Kony's victims "seem to prefer peace to a grand reckoning" for the LRA leader.

¶16. (U) USG Activities: Three production members from "Dan Rather Reports," a news program hosted by Dan Rather on HDNetwork, arrived in Uganda on July 22 and are filming at Camp Kasenyi July 23-27. The purpose of filming is to cover/interview U.S. service members training of Uganda People's Defense Force (UPDF) soldiers in antiterrorism tactics, techniques and procedures. This coverage has been approved by CJTF-HOA commanders, U.S. Embassy in Kampala officials, Ugandan military, and U.S. European Command (UECOM) public affairs.

¶17. (U) The first journalism training workshop organized by Internews Network for Ugandan journalists is taking place July 23-29 in Gulu. Fourteen Ugandan journalists from Gulu, Koboko, Kitgum, Apac, Lira, and Kampala are participating in the training. The workshop is entitled: "THE JUBA PEACE TALKS: FROM THE CONFERENCE HALL TO THE COMMUNITY." The training program is the first one of a

series taking place with USAID funding.
BROWNING